

Justice for G. Gordon Liddy

To end a strange caper in the strangest way, four of the convicted Watergate burglars have agreed to accept \$200,000 from former President Nixon's still undissipated 1972 campaign fund. The out-of-court settlement on its face recognizes the plaintiffs' claim that they had been misled into believing their crime was sponsored by the Government in the interest of national security.

If they were so deceived, it would seem to have been by their chief contact, former C.I.A. aide E. Howard Hunt, who was released from prison yesterday. The four served 14 months and Mr. Hunt 31 months. That leaves one of the original band still in jail, where he has already served nearly four years, with at least four years and possibly as many as 17 years to go.

The victim of this unevenhanded justice is G. Gordon

Liddy. The explanation for his plight appears to lie solely in his refusal to cop a plea, "sing" or otherwise make life easier for the prosecution or the court. Stiff-necked as he was—and continues to be—Mr. Liddy (who was fined \$40,000 into the bad bargain) is being treated shamefully. He had a constitutional right to his silence and a human right to the folly of believing himself no less than a patriot. Neither attitude can justify a sentence from 20 to 40 times that usually given for a first offense of unarmed breaking and entering.

President Ford took no action on a petition for Mr. Liddy's pardon, quick though he had been with mercy for another Watergate figure. If the prisoner rates no cash award from the Nixon campaign fund, he surely rates the justice of an end to his punishment.